

**Men's' perceptions of their role as a father:  
A comparison of perceived family values and attachment styles  
in men's families of origin  
and the families they have created as an adult.**

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Karma (my daughter) for her patience and understanding of a father who was sometimes a “bit grumpy”.

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## ABSTRACT

Fatherhood has been under studied for many years but there has recently been a increase in research on fatherhood due largely to the findings that fathers can have a major influence on the development of their children, especially their sons.

This thesis is a study of the perceptions men have about their role as a father and their perceptions of their fathers role. Because fatherhood is such a vast area I have concentrated on what are considered some of the main dimensions that are associated with fatherhood, those being, intergenerational transmission of attachment, family characteristics and the role of the father.

To partially answer this question I used two groups of fathers consisting of solo fathers and intact fathers. Both groups of fathers were given a series of questionnaires to assess the role of their fathers in their family of origin and also the role they see themselves as having in the family they have created as an adult.

Both groups of fathers perceived themselves as doing better in their families that they had created today when compared to their families of origin in which they were reared. This suggests that fathers do in fact pass on their values to their sons who feel that they not only use those values but that they enhance them.

The precise nature of the role of the father varied, however, in the two types of families studied .

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically fathers have been portrayed as aloof and unaffectionate individuals. Many children experienced their fathers as disciplinarians, and were mindful of their absence. For a significant number of families in the present day, that image is no longer a valid one. Thus, for a multitude of reasons many fathers are more accessible today, both physically and emotionally.

Fathers are also presenting themselves in a wide range of roles than father models of the past. For example, the roles of stepfathers, single fathers, and traditional fathers, to name but a few. It is unfortunate that much time has passed where the importance of the role of the father has been overlooked and invalidated. In recent years, however, researchers have provided data that indicates the importance of fathers in the socioemotional development of their children and families. Therefore, it is also crucial to examine differences between different types of fathers, focusing on values, systems of beliefs' parenting approaches and attachment styles. Drawing upon the pool of knowledge that has been accumulated from research on mothers, and their impact on the development of children, it is clear that research on fathers would integrate and enhance this growing pool of knowledge.

By distinguishing where fathers learn from, as well as the factors that lead to and enable sons to become successful fathers, presents implications that encompasses not only the present but also the future generations. The question of whether or not sons do in fact learn intergenerationally from their fathers presents major implications for anyone interested in fatherhood, and its impact on the greater society.

For many years, researchers have focused on mothers because of their traditional role of nurturer and caregiver. This focus is no longer relevant for many types of families whose numbers are increasing year by year. It is evident that changes in the family social system within the past forty years, have impacted on the family structures and with these changes, the role of fathers have experienced transition. Clearly defined areas that were once viewed as specific to women and mothers are no longer considered to be unattainable by men. A range of circumstances that necessitates changing work patterns combined with more women joining the work force, many of today's fathers are finding themselves fulfilling the role of nurturer and caregiver. Fathers today want to be more involved, both emotionally and physically, with their children than past generations. This dramatic shift in father's attitudes towards parenting has highlighted many areas relating to the role of fathers, and what they contribute to the development of their children, especially their sons, the majority of whom will one day become fathers themselves.

For many years, it was believed that children formed secure attachments only to their mothers and that fathers were essentially perceived as breadwinners and disciplinarians. This previous misconception has been exposed, and fathers are now being acknowledged as capable as mothers in forming attachments with their children. With this new found realisation that a significant number of fathers are indeed interacting with their children more than in past times, poses the question of how these interactions influence both the children of today, and also those children as future parents. This is without doubt of great interest to those who are concerned with all stages of a child's development.

Fatherhood has come under much scrutiny in recent years especially with the increasing number of children who are being reared in fatherless homes. This combined with the ever-emergent increases in child delinquency, especially with boys, has been linked to this phenomenon. There is an alternative side to the negative attributes associated with father absence and inappropriate fathering that are portrayed by the mass media. Empirical knowledge indicates changing conditions surrounding parenting, and shows that men in many cases, can and do parent, to the same quality and in some cases, perform better than their female counterparts.

One of the key findings in recent research that causes a great deal of controversy indicates that the gender of the child, and or parent can have a major impact on the development of children. In light of this research, it is even more imperative that the relationship between fathers and sons is studied. Combined with the changes that are happening within society, research in this area will be of great value, contributing not only to our current perspectives on parenting but for future parents as well. We can learn about how the dynamics of fathers and interactions with their children can affect not only their children, but also future generations.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the type of information regarding the role of fathers and the family processes those fathers to their sons. This thesis will start with a literature review of factors that have been shown to influence the role of fathers and their relationship to their families.



## INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will consist of a number of relevant topics associated with fatherhood that will be presented under section headings. These topics have been specifically chosen so as to give the reader a deeper understanding of the components and variations of fathers that make fatherhood. By doing so it is hoped that whether fathers do indeed transmit their values to their sons and the processes by which this takes place will become clearer.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERHOOD

This chapter on fatherhood looks at some of the different aspects that make up fatherhood for example, types of families, attachment and fathers, influences on fathers and by fathers and also that fathers can form attachments as a part of being a father.

Fathers are significant contributors to many aspects of family functioning pertinent to children's well-being and development (Belsky, 1981; Lamb, 1976; Popenoe, 1998). Various authors propose the effects on children of growing up in fatherless homes is a national concern, reflecting awareness of the negative impact of such homes on many children (Broder, 1993; Lamb, 1997; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Data from Statistics New Zealand show that although four out of five New Zealanders still live as part of a family unit, the make up of such families is rapidly changing. Two parent families are still the most common 44.9 per cent of all families in the 1996 census. Catching up fast are couple only families (37.3 per cent) and one parent families (17.7 per cent). Couple only families have grown by 15.5 per cent, compared with a 10.9 per cent increase in one-parent families. People having children are getting older, with a median age of 29 in 1998 compared with 25 in 1971 (Christchurch Star, September 27, 2000).

The idea of changing family structures has major implications for fathers, especially considering the changing structure of families. Because in the past there has been little research on fathers there are many questions about the implications of changing roles of fathers and their effects on their children today and also future generations. Not only are there serious questions that need to be answered as to the

effect of fatherlessness, but there is now also a need for research on the effects of fathers who are not biological fathers, ( i.e., step fathers).

The father's influence on children cannot be adequately conceptualized only in terms of father-child interactions but must be understood in terms of a broader family context. Fathers affect multiple dimensions of family functioning and are, in turn, themselves influenced by multiple factors outside of their relationships with their children (Lamb, 1976 ; 1997). As Lamb suggests, fathers are not confined to a simple and closed relationship with their children but are affected by a range of influences outside of the ones they have with their children. These influences cover a multitude of areas. One of the major areas is the changing work habits of not only fathers but mothers as well. Generally fathers are working longer hours today which impacts on the amount of time they have for interacting with their children. This can lead to a decrease in the fathers availability. Both fathers and mothers are working longer hours which can lead to fathers' needing to change their styles of parenting. For example, instead of "just" being the "bread winner" they may need to take on certain roles that in the past were seen as the domain of mothers.

### FATHERHOOD AND ATTACHMENT

In a study on father-son attachment (an emotional bond) security, Belsky (1996), demonstrated that fathers of secure infants were more extraverted and agreeable than fathers of insecure infants, they also tended to have more positive marriages, and experienced more positive emotional spillover between work and family.

The existence of an emotionally available father contributes to a child's development in both overt and subtle ways. Hence, men's psychological care and

emotional generosity (expressiveness and intimacy), with their children appear to have the greatest long-term implications for children's development (Krampe & Fairweather, 1993). For fathers and children, the father's level of psychological distress is the most important predictor of the level of intimacy and individuation perceived by children in relationships (Krampe & Farweather, 1993).

Enlarging on the implications of male psychological care and emotional generosity on child development Grossman, Pollack, and Golding (1988) provided evidence that children take strong cues from the psychological relationships they have with their fathers. In this regard, Grossman et al.(1988) found fathers' autonomy and affiliation, assessed five years earlier, predicted similar characteristics in their children at age five and a half years old. Maladaptive characteristics, defined as the capacity for separation and closeness (i.e., detachment, isolation, distance), could similarly be predicted, and thus linked to children's early psychological development. These predictions can be linked to the "intergenerational transmission hypothesis" which is based on social learning theory's premise that behaviour can be acquired by observing others (Bandura,1973). According to social learning theory principles, behaviours will be more likely to occur when certain conditions are present in the original learning situation.

Communication and intimacy is then an essential part of fathering as it can further secure attachment. Communication can be likened to education meaning that the quality and degree of education by itself allows individuals to grow and further their development by allowing their creativity to be expressed and therefore giving them a sense of achievement and a sense of self that can be built upon. Intimacy is something that is shown or felt by someone and it can only be experienced by an individual who is prepared to risk being intimate. It is clear that how a father who is

capable of being intimate and able to communicate with his children, especially sons, would also enhance the probability of building a secure attachment.

Erikson (1991), found that middle class fathers spend more time with their children and are more nurturing and supportive than working class fathers, particularly when children are young. This suggests that working class or lower socio-economic fathers may have less time and resources to devote to their children.

### FATHERS AND INFANCY ATTACHMENT

As early as 1964 Schaffer and Emerson questioned whether infants formed attachments to their fathers. Mothers in their study reported that their infants began to protest separations from fathers as well as mothers at approximately seven to nine months of age. Babies formed attachments to those with whom they interacted regularly; therefore, involvement is a key factor in relation to attachment.

Pedersen and Robson (1969) also relied on maternal reports, although their focus was on responses to reunion rather than on separation protest. Seventy-five percent of the mothers reported that their infants responded positively and enthusiastically when their fathers returned from work. This led Pedersen and Robson (1969), to conclude that these infants were indeed attached to their fathers. Among the boy infants, intensity of greeting was correlated with the frequency of paternal caretaking.

Unstructured observations of both mother\father interaction with new-borns in a maternity ward revealed that fathers were neither inept nor uninterested in interaction with their new-borns. The overwhelming number of measures employed by Parke and his colleagues demonstrated that fathers and mothers were similarly involved in interaction with their children (Parke & O'Leary, 1976; Parke, O'Leary, & West, 1972).

Schaffer's (1963) research on hospitalized infants suggested that the amount and quality of social interaction between mother and infant may help form the basis for the quality of future attachments within and outside of family. Hence, the quality of mother-infant interaction could facilitate the formation of father-infant attachments and affect the amount of interaction necessary for father-infant attachments to form.

Palkovitz's (1985) conclusion that birth attendance, in and of itself, does not appear to have consistent, clear or strong effects on paternal involvement or behaviour. It is birth attendance followed by extensive father-infant interaction in the hospital that may stimulate greater paternal involvement and engagement (Keller, Hildebrandt, & Richards, 1985).

Paternal involvement then, does seem to strengthen infant-father attachment although as long as mothers assume primary responsibility for child care, they appear to be the preferred attachment figures. This has interesting implications for single fatherhood, as the father in this instance is the primary caregiver, suggesting that fathers who do become primary caregivers would become as attached as mothers fulfilling the same role. Several researchers have established that infants and two-year-old children demonstrated similar preferences for fathers and mothers in studies of separation anxiety (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1976, 1977a). Ninio and Rinott (1988) reported that the Israeli fathers who were more involved with their nine-month-olds also attributed the greatest levels of competence to them. This suggests that perceptions of infant competence and paternal involvement reinforce one another. In the main, research confirms that most fathers are sufficiently responsive to their infants needs so that attachments can form provided that a adequate amount of father-infant interaction takes place (Crawley & Sherrod, 1984).

Moreover, separation protest was the primary focus of observational studies of father-infant attachment that began in the 1970s. Kotelchuck (1972) reported that 12-, 15-, 18-, and 21-month-old infants predictably protested when left alone by *either* parent, explored little while the parents were absent, and greeted them positively when they returned.

Later research also confirmed that infants and toddlers protested when left by either their mothers or fathers in nursery school settings (Field et al., 1984). They found that infants protested least when they had highly involved fathers and that heightened paternal involvement also delayed the onset of separation protest. Kotelchuck et al. (1972) discovered that infants with highly interactive fathers strongly protested separation from both parents at 15 and 18 months of age whereas those with less interactive fathers protested at 12 months of age. By the mid-1970s, therefore, there was substantial evidence that children developed attachments to their fathers in infancy. Furthermore, teenage boys who have experienced attachment difficulties early in life are three times more likely to commit violent crimes (Raine, 1993).

Although mothers have traditionally been seen as more reliable sources of comfort and security, fathers do contribute to this role, particularly through the area of play and interaction, especially with their sons (Lamb, 1997). In addition, affiliative behaviour measures showed sons' preferences for fathers throughout the first two years of life (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1977a, 1977c).

Literature on attachment contains many examples of fathers' participation in childcare being linked to the mothers' work patterns (Barnett & Baruch, 1981; Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Marsiglio, 1991). In addition Deater-Deckard and colleagues (1994), investigated fathers and mothers in dual-earner households who placed their children

(aged one to five) in a center-based child care facility during the day. They found that fathers and mothers reported similar levels of separation anxiety.

Furthermore, Grossman and Grossman's (1984) results were similar to the above researchers. On reunion with their infants after separation, a high proportion of infants classified as secure communicated with parents directly. In contrast only a few of the infants classified as avoidant did so. It also true, findings that link open and effective communication between children and their parents to the secure attachment typification are not limited to infancy and toddlerhood. To illustrate, Main and colleagues (1985), study of 6-year-olds and their parents found that easy and coherent expression was related to security assessed in a variety of ways at 6 years of age, as well as in infancy.

### BOWLBY, THE "FATHER" OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

This section highlights some of the history of the formation of the theory of attachment and also the importance of communication in determining the style of attachment that will form between fathers and their children.

John Bowlby was the first person to propose a theory of attachment in response to the question of why infants often protested so much when separated from the caregiver (Bowlby, 1969). In recent years the importance of attachment theory, or the manner in which a child develops an emotional bond with his or her primary caregiver, has been recognised as being one of the most important developmental challenges facing an individual. As a result of early attachment experiences, individuals accumulate knowledge about their lives and, more importantly, develop a set of expectations, known as "internal working models", about themselves, their significant others, and about the larger social world they inhabit. It should be noted



that an individual's experiences with her or his primary caregiver may negatively or positively influence the type of internal working model that is used to form expectations about one's self and one's place in the world. Thus, individuals early attachment patterns with their caregiver are thought to influence whether these infants perceive the world to be a generally safe environment or to be a hostile environment.

Although a number of schemes have been developed to characterise different patterns of attachment there seems to be three basic attachment styles common to most of these classification schemes: Secure Attachment, in which the individual has developed a trusting and caring relationship with his or her caregiver; Avoidant Attachment, in which the child is fearful or disdainful of the caregiver and seeks to distance itself from him or her; Anxious-Ambivalent Attachment, in which the child has not developed a strong bond of attachment with its caregiver and has fears of being abandoned.

Although individuals' internal working models of attachment are thought to be formed primarily during the first few months of infancy, research has shown that such patterns of attachment may be successfully used to characterise other aspects of childhood and early adulthood as well (e.g., social and cognitive development in childhood, close relationships in adulthood, vocational satisfaction, and risk of psychopathology). Indeed, Bowlby (1979) maintained that attachment relationships "characterise human beings from the cradle to the grave" (p.129).

Although initial research on attachment centered on the relationship between mothers and infants, more recent studies, however, have begun to recognise the importance of the relationship between fathers and children as well. Such research clearly shows the majority of infants establish attachment relationships with their

fathers by the end of the first year and that these relationships function in a manner similar to infant-mother relationships (Cox, Owen, Henderson, & Margand, 1992).

With the discovery that fathers can form attachments similar to those of mothers, fathers and attachment has become a growing area of interest especially for those interested in fatherhood and its effect on the development of children.

Bowlby's early experiences convinced him of the significant role played by the interaction of parents with the child's personality development and of the ways those interactions had been influenced by early experiences with his or her parents.

Convinced of the significance of real life events on the course of child development Bowlby chose to focus on the effects of early separation from the mother. It was during this time that Bowlby explored his theoretical and clinical interest in the intergenerational transmission of attachment relations and his belief in the possibility of helping children by helping parents (Bretherton, 1992). Women had traditionally been intertwined more with the home than men, thus it is not surprising in the social climate that Bowlby wrote he concentrated upon the effects of mother attachment. Bowlby's report for the World Health Organisation (1951), concerning the fate of children without families, emphasised that in infancy fathers have their uses, but that normally they play second role to mothers, their main role being to provide emotional support to their wives mothering (Bretherton, 1992).

There have been a lot of changes in the past fifty years since Bowlby's report. A great many changes have taken place with regard to the role of fathers and their influence on not only the family, but also on their interactions with their children. Bowlby saw the father's central role as "bread winner" and this highly limiting emphasis is no longer helpful in understanding the complex and far reaching effects

of fathers impact on not only the present family, but also the future families in which fathers play a great part in the development of children and thereby future parents as well.

### ATTACHMENT AND COMMUNICATION

A central factor pertaining to the quality of attachment between parent and child, or a child's attachment type, is communication. Once we focus on the degree to which communication between a parent-child pair is free-flowing or not, it quickly becomes apparent that, from the earliest days of life, the degree of freedom of communication in the pairs destined to develop a secure pattern of attachment is far greater than it is in those who do not (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton 1971). This requires that each should have reasonably accurate models of self and other that are regularly up-dated by free communication between them. It is here that the mothers of the securely attached children excel and those of the insecure are markedly deficient. The role of free communication, emotional as well as cognitive, in determining mental health is strongly supported e.g. (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy 1985), who found a strong correlation between how a mother describes her relationships with her parents during her childhood and the pattern of attachment her child now has with her. Whereas the mother of a secure infant is able to talk freely with feeling about her childhood, the mother of an insecure infant is not. The above findings were also found to hold true for fathers (Bowlby, 1988, pg.134). These findings have major implications for the attachments that fathers have and the ways in which they communicate. It is highly possible that we can now gain insights into the sorts of attachment that fathers have by their ability, or inability, to communicate about their family of origin. By gaining these insights we can also test how certain "strengths",

such as those in the area of communication are related to other areas such as styles of parenting, family security and how fathers perceive their involvement as fathers in the development of their children. This gives researchers a method which could be used to assess the types of interactions between not only mothers, but fathers as well, in the study of developmental issues regarding not only children but adults as well.

### INTERNAL WORKING MODELS

This chapter on internal working models will explain the importance of early patterns and relationships between fathers and their children in the formation and development of their beliefs about themselves.

In Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973), the "internal working model of self" is assumed to have a major impact on socioemotional competence or adjustment. According to Bowlby (1979, p. 117), "the concept of a working model of self comprehends data at present conceived in terms of self-image, self-esteem, etc."

The self working model is assumed to operate in a large part automatically (unconsciously) and to guide the child's perception and behaviour in such a way as to confirm or to fulfil itself (self-fulfilling prophecy) (Ainsworth, 1990). Consequently, children with a positive representation of self would eventually become more competent or better adjusted than children with a negative self representation. In attachment theory, the following explanation is given for the effect of the relationships with attachment figures on the self. Based on actual transaction patterns, the child builds a working model of the relationship with each attachment figure (Ainsworth, 1990; Levy, 2000; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

A child with a secure working model of his or her attachment relationship with mother is assumed to have positive expectations regarding her availability and

responsiveness, where as a child with an insecure working model is assumed to develop negative expectations (Ainsworth, 1990). Building on the representations of an attachment relationship, the child comes to develop an overall working model of the self separate from these relationships or a global sense of their own worth as a person (Cassidy, 1990). Hence, if the child develops secure working models of attachment relations, he or she is likely to develop a working model of the self as valued and special. Conversely, if the child has come to develop insecure working models of attachment relations, he or she is inclined to build a working model of the self as unworthy and unlovable (Bretherton, 1991; 1993). In other words, the quality or security of the representations of attachment relationships is inextricably intertwined with the quality of the overall representation of self (Cassidy, 1990).

Most theorists agree that one of the most powerful determinants of young children's self can be found in the interactions with "significant others" (Bretherton, 1991). For young children, these significant others, are usually their caretakers. This point emphasises the important role fathers can help fulfil in developing a child's sense of worthfulness and esteem. Fathers are therefore part of the process by which children learn about their world, how to act, react and in time become adults. The role a father plays is dependent on many factors I would suggest that the first is the father's availability in a physical sense and the second is the fathers desire to actually become involved with his children and as a result is able to teach and educate his children some of the lessons of life that have made him a man and father. Thereby passing on the life skills that he has learnt to future generations. Results show that young children with a positive working model of self presented more self-esteeming behaviour than young children with a negative representation of self. This means that

the former were more likely to present active displays of confidence, curiosity, initiative, and independence and adaptive reaction to change or stress (Harter, 1989).

Gender differences have also emerged that call for attention. Clear gender differences were found in children's competence and behaviour as perceived by the teachers. Boys were rated as being less cognitively and physically competent, less socially accepted, less well adapted to school and as showing more disruptive and withdrawn behaviour and less self-esteeming behaviour than girls (Colombok & Fivush, 1994), according to their teachers. These observations may be linked to the less attached relationship between a son and father in comparison to the close attachment between daughter and mother. Hence, the quality or the security of the child's working model of an attachment relationship is inferred on the basis of the way he or she communicates about this relationship, for example, via attachment doll stories (Bretherton, 1988).

It is again emphasised that the working model of the attachment figure and the working model of the self are closely intertwined and need careful examination. The working models a child builds of his mother and her ways of communicating and behaving towards him or her, and a comparable model of his father, together with the complementary models of himself in interaction with each, are being built by a child during the first few years of his or her life, and it is postulated, soon become established as influential cognitive structures (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

The forms those structures take, evidence strongly suggests, are based on a child's real life experiences of day to day interactions with his parents. Subsequently the model of himself that he builds reflects also the images that his parents have of him, images that are communicated not only by how each treats him but also by how each of them speaks to him (Cook, 2000).

These models then govern how he or she feels towards each parent and how he or she feels about himself, how he expects each parent to treat him and how he plans his own behaviour towards them. Once built evidence suggests that these models of a parent and self interaction tend to persist and are so taken for granted that they come to operate at an unconscious level (Levy, 2000).

A key feature of the working model of the self is the notion of how acceptable the self is in the eyes of the attachment figure (Bowlby, 1973). Because of their origin in actual interpersonal transactions, the internal working models of self and of attachment figures develop in close complementarity. For example, a child who experiences and hence represents attachment figures as primarily rejecting may form a complementary internal working model of the self as unworthy. Similarly a child who experiences a parental figure as emotionally available and supportive will most probably construct a working model of the self as competent and loveable. This construction of complementary internal working models representing the self and attachment figures is a continuous process. The child becomes more competent and has more highly differentiated thought processes at his or her disposal leading, in turn, to changes in how the caregiver responds to the child. These changes become reflected in the child's, and the parents', internal working models (Simpson, 1997).

The internal working model (core belief system) is the cognitive representation of early attachment relationships. Children develop beliefs about themselves, relationships and life in general based on the nature of early attachment patterns with primary caregivers. In order to account for the tendency for patterns of attachment increasingly to become a property of the child himself, attachment theory invokes the concept of working models of self and parents.

## INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

This chapter highlights the probability that roles learned in the family of origin are likely to be learned by members of that family and that those roles will be transmitted over time, particularly from fathers to their sons.

Parent-child relationships are among the most common social roles played over the life-course and the most enduring social ties. Research studies focus on children and parents because of the important role that parents play in children's daily lives and in their subsequent well-being as adults (Walker & Thompson, 1983). How boys and girls understand and develop knowledge about gender roles and expectations has received some attention over time, particularly in disciplines such as developmental psychology, but how children use this knowledge and integrate it into their lives over the life-course and within families has received considerably less (Coles & Coles, 1988; Parke, 1996). An important perspective on how parents aid children in self development is the unidirectional perspective on intergenerational learning. Within this traditional perspective, parents are considered the *principal* agents of socialisation in childhood (Freud, 1933, Erickson, 1950; Heilbrun et al., 1965). The family is seen as the provider of stability and continuity to individual members and of the systematic socialisation through which children come to understand the norms of the social order.

Intergenerational similarity in attitudes is attributed to the socialisation function and activities of the family (Glass et al., 1986). Children learn their parents' beliefs, values and attitudes through both direct teaching and indirect observation; they actively seek out this information or passively accept it as a function of social conditioning. Implicit in traditional explanations is the assumption that childhood



socialisation is so powerful as to continue throughout adulthood (Campbell, 1969; Chodorow, 1978; Germain, 1994).

This body of work on intergenerational learning processes suggests that families are units of individuals and that the events, episodes, and activities that affect individual family members also influence the unit and the course of family life. Each family member in each generation has a space that he or she shapes, and that shaping therefore becomes a part of the way families construct themselves and adapt to change. Families are biological and social structures, providing the first intersection between individual and society. No matter what the family pattern, intergenerational transmission seems to occur.

### TRANSMISSION OF IDEAS

Research on intergenerational learning within families includes a range of studies that focus on the transmission of beliefs and practices and the modelling of behaviours from generation to generation. That is, it seeks to understand better the impact of families of origin on children's individual behaviours and family practices throughout the lifespan (Fitzgerald et al., 1995).

Fathers who see their role as solely or primarily the economic provider or head of the family may assign more importance to these roles for their sons' future role as father.

In different societies expectations of masculine behaviour vary so behaviour must also be seen in a social context. Thus, the message a father gives his son pertaining to masculinity is within a particular social context. Research and practice on intergenerational learning, within and outside of biologically connected families, assume, that in settings where children and adults have opportunities to interact over

periods of time, adults transmit knowledge, beliefs and practices to children either through direct teaching or informal activities (Lamb, 1999).

Intergenerational transmission of parenting styles can take place between parent and child, grandparent and grandchild, and other adult-child configurations and include adult relative modelling of a variety of behaviours, such as, talking or demonstrating the value and importance of beliefs, attitudes and practices (Gadsden, 1993). Intergenerational learning occurs in all families, irrespective of class, race or culture, and fathers contribute in many ways to how children think about their roles and abilities into adulthood (Emihovich, 1984).

Emihovich's research demonstrated that there is a strong, positive relationship between fathers and sons sex role beliefs and expectations, especially among fathers of adolescent boys. Fathers who were less traditional in their own sex role beliefs and who held less stereotyped expectations for their sons had sons who matched their fathers expectations. Emihovich also found that sons of fathers who held both traditional beliefs and stereotypic expectations were not in conflict with their fathers, but instead, conformed closely to their fathers expectations.

Consequently one of the main conclusions that can be drawn from Emihovich's research is that because the fathers beliefs and expectations clearly influenced their sons beliefs, it is unlikely there will be a drastic change in adolescent boys sex role beliefs unless their fathers support them. Despite ongoing changes in today's society as to how the male sex role is perceived the father is still the key figure determining an adolescent boy's willingness to accept changes in his own sex role. These findings illustrate the importance of a father's role in the development of sons and the implications for future fathers. It is the changes that take place between sons and their fathers that influence later roles. It would be highly probable that fathers who do

communicate well, and are seen as positive role models by their sons will not only have more positive relationships, but also when those sons become fathers they will be more supportive of their sons.

Bowlby (1969), proposed that children tend unwittingly to identify with parents and therefore to adopt, when they become parents, the same patterns of behaviour towards children that they themselves have experienced during their own childhood, patterns of interaction are transmitted, more or less faithfully, from one generation to another. To illustrate the intergenerational transmission of behaviours and beliefs, Dark and Bolton (1985) found that fathers of children with Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD) showed greater levels of obsessional thoughts than nonclinical controls. Similarly, fathers of OCD children and adolescents were more likely to receive a diagnosis of OCD than would be expected in the general population (Lenane et al., 1990).

### TRANSMISSION OF BEHAVIOUR

Children are likely to emulate the parenting behaviours to which they have been exposed during their childhood. Generally, these are the behaviours of parents, (Burton & Dilworth-Anderson, 1991; Tinsley & Parke, 1987). The probability of behaviours being transferred from one generation to the next is increased when parents and children are similar in education, social status, employment, and other social factors that affect continuity within a family and the ability of an adult parent to contribute to the social welfare of the family (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1994).

Boys who learn to be violent are more likely to be violent towards their wives and children and to be involved in crime when they become adults (Shute & Spivack, 1988). Fry (1993) suggests that adults favour conflict resolution patterns they experienced as children within their family and that these ways of resolving conflict become a part of community practices of violence. Marsh (1991) also emphasises the importance of studying the effect of abusive in contrast to non-abusive parent child relations, thereby hoping to gain information that will aid in the development of strategies to minimise the destructive consequences of abusive parent - child relations.

In a study of 44 mothers abused as children, Egeland et al. (1987), concluded that child abuse victims who do not continue the cycle of abuse share several common experiences, e.g., one parent figure who showed them love and support; a fairly stable living situation; intact, childhood families; and a supportive husband or partner living in the home. Dysfunction in the family of origin seems to have a negative effect on the propensity toward alcohol abuse and long-term adjustment to sexual abuse. This highlights the importance of having a functional, supportive and loving father and the positive effects those qualities can have on stopping unhealthy cycles such as abusive ones.

The intergenerational effects of parenting are consistent with our intuitive sense that children in happy, generally nonconflictual, intact families will experience fewer problems with parenting than those who grew up in homes where there were conflictual parent relationships. Although we should continue to examine the intergenerational effect of these “healthy” homes, substantial research needs to be focused on the negative consequences of homes in which there is abuse and the differential effects of father involvement in this violence and father absence.

## TRANSFER OF FAMILY OF ORIGIN PARENTING STYLES

Bowlby believed that parenting behaviour, like attachment behaviour, is in some degree pre-programmed (prewired for certain behaviours) and therefore ready to develop along certain lines when conditions elicit it. On the contrary, this is not to say that the finer points of parenting are not learned, some of it during interaction with children and babies, and much of it through observation of how other parents behave. This process of observation begins in the parents own childhood, particularly with the way his parents treated him and his siblings (Bowlby, 1988). Intergenerational learning is apparent in the parenting styles of adult children, with many choosing not to inflict upon their children the harsh parenting they experienced as children. However, the specific mechanism for intergenerational transmission and the actual effects of father involvement is difficult to determine.

Intergenerational studies by Cox et al. (1985) suggest that children who experience positive home environments tend to create similar environments for their children. Young adults who, prior to the birth of their first-born, and reporting high quality parenting by their parents, adapted better to early parenthood and became better parents themselves than young adults who reported low-quality parenting. Although, Shepard (1980), argues gender may play an important part in mediating these perceptions of parenting quality. To expand, sons and daughters may interpret their family of origin environment and their parents messages in different ways.

McLanahan and Bumpass (1988) established several explanations for intergenerational instability. To illustrate, relationships between father and son may decline after divorce due to a drop in the family's standard of living, or the interpersonal relationships within the family may decline (Krein & Beller, 1988). Furthermore, father absence can have a substantial impact upon a child's personality

development and importantly on sexual orientation for sons (Emihovich et al., 1984). Thus, disorganised attachment is transmitted intergenerationally, parents raised in violent, frightening and maltreating families transmit their fear and unresolved losses to their children through insensitive or abusive care, depression and lack of love and affection.

Caspi and Elder (1988), suggest that intergenerationally unstable personalities, are produced by unstable marital relationships and ineffective parenting in a repeating, cyclical way. These authors believe conflictual family patterns help establish unstable parenting patterns of offspring. Therefore, the relational styles learned in childhood are likely to be evoked in similar situations (Caspi & Elder, 1988). Children's experiences with their parents influence their perceptions about and the quality of their intimate relationships and mate choices (Benson et al., 1992; 1993). Therefore, Benson et al. (1993), found some support for intergenerational transmission of patterns of intimacy, confirming the hypothesis that anxiety resulting from controlling families influences subsequent communication among adolescents.

In studies by Egeland et al. (1987), and Herrenkohl et al. (1983), adult children were able to develop trust and intimacy by rising above the obstacles of an abusive childhood, particularly with the support of loving partners and spouses and/or supportive networks in their adult lives. The priority that a parent accords to attachment issues in relating to his or her infant tends to be closely linked to working models of attachment relationships in the family of origin, unless the parent has been able to revise these models during adolescence or early adulthood (Main, 1985).

## THE AGE OF FATHERHOOD

The context in which fathers function varies according to their age, marital history, and other aspects of their developmental history (Lamb, 1997). Thus, fathers are a diverse and complex segment of the population each being formed by his own unique life experiences of not only the past but the present as well. Many areas of a father's life interact in various ways and effect his relationships for example, a father who is secure in the work he has chosen and is earning a good wage and has already been raising children for a number of years compared to a father who does not have job security, is not paid well, and is in the situation where he has recently become a father.

To add to the complexity of fatherhood the way the father feels about himself and those he interacts with , will greatly influence how he deals with stressful situations in his life. It would be reasonable to assume that a father who had been reared in an environment that gave him permission to ask questions, and learn positive life skills from his parents would fair better than someone who had not learned those life skills. It would seem fair to say that a father who had a good role model as a child would use those skills learned earlier in life and indeed would be likely to increase those skills as time went by. This is not to say that someone who did not have a positive role model would not cope with being a father as well, as it is always possible for individuals to make positive change in their lives.

## FATHER PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

This section looks at both the positive and negative possible consequences of having a father present or absent and the implication for future sons and fathers. The resulting findings in this chapter suggest that fathers do in fact affect their children in a multitude of ways.

Fathers are stepping from the sidelines of family life to play a more active role as parents. Despite progress, the new demands of the work place often make it hard for fathers to be the brilliant parent and worker they are told they should be. A host of routine responsibilities rule the lives of most working fathers. To play a fuller role in their families they need to be home for dinner, attend school events such as sports days, go on playcentre trips, take care of sick partners and children, and do their share of childcare in the holidays. Many fathers feel their careers are not only damaging their family life but that their family life is damaging their career (The Press, Monday, August 23, 1999).

Father availability tends to have an impact on whether individual boys will later exhibit aggressive tendencies. This suggests sex role conflict and its expression, aggression, is the indirect effect of inconsistent contact with the father (McBride & Rane, 1997). Other researchers have also pointed out that impaired contact or lack of contact with fathers appears to have its most dramatic effects on male children (e.g., Bee, 1974; Cox, 1978; Mott, 1994). Of particular concern is the development of a masculine identity (Mitchell & Wilson, 1967). School success, and social confidence leading to successful integration at the adult life stage. Cazenave, (1979), also argued that the fathers absence created conditions where a male child was unable to fulfil his adult male provider role. Several studies indicate father absence effects can



be short term, long term, or recurring in the lives of male offspring (Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington & Camara, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1978).

Studies have also suggested the long-term consequences of father absence primarily deriving from divorce, include the development of inappropriate sex role attitudes (Biller & Weiss, 1970), promiscuity, and interpersonal problems with romantic relations (Hetherington, 1972; Hetherington et al., 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976). Although, father presence, where the father is violent, abusive or interacts poorly with his sons could also bring similar negative effects (Hazelton, 1999).

Moreover, some authors have highlighted the important role fathers play in disciplining their male children, (Atkinson & Ogston, 1974). Broude (1990) suggested that residential fathers reduce aggressive behaviours in boys by modifying the effects of Western cultural messages that value hypermasculinity in men.

In addition, numerous studies have emphasized that availability, contact and parental involvement with fathers reduces aggressive behaviours in boys (Biller, 1968, Broude, 1990; Mott, 1994; Santrock, 1977). This research could support the idea that it is intimacy rather than residence itself that is most important in the development of quality father-son attachment. Extensive contact, participation and involvement of fathers has been found to improve the well-being of younger children (Furstenberg, et al., 1987; Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993; McAdoo, 1993).

Biller (1968) conducted much of his work, in the early 1950s where masculine stereotypes in fathering were the norm. As the research area for studying fathers' parenting roles has expanded and other social changes have occurred; greater values for "androgyny" in interpersonal relations with males have, to a degree, replaced masculine stereotypes (Lamb, 1987).

Various researchers have argued that nonresidence of fathers has a negative effect on child development. This negative effect has been explored in terms of intellectual, psychosocial, and psychosexual development of these children in relation to absent father-child relations (Lamb, 1997; Popenoe, 1996). Boys not sharing residence with their fathers have been described as aggressive, particularly toward their mothers (Hetherington, 1972; Santrock, 1977). A large body of evidence exists that suggests continued contact with non-residential fathers who are loving, supportive, and nurturant increases emotional well-being and adjustment of female children (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Mott, 1994). The positive effects, as the result of a close attachment between a non-residential father and offspring continue into early adulthood (Draughn & Waggenpack, 1986; Fish & Biller, 1973).

#### EFFECTS OF NON RESIDENCE

Studies of father absence have identified children's behavioural, academic and social problems. Lessing, Zagorin, and Nelson (1970) found children in father-absent households had lower I.Q., verbal and performance scores than children in father-present households. Boys' academic performance is typically reported as being impaired by father absence (Biller, 1974; Hetherington, Camara, & Featherman, 1983; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Lamb, 1997).

Studies on the psychological vulnerability of children from father-absent homes and non-residential households suggest that these children are more likely to experience emotional disorders (Baydar, 1988) and depression (Amato, 1991) as compared with father-present households. These effects have been found to be mediated by marital status and educational attainment in adulthood (Amato & Keith, 1991).

It has been reported that sons in resident father homes are more mature, socially outgoing and independent, and less demanding, and have higher self-esteem than do daughters living with their fathers (Santrock & Warshak, 1979). On the other hand, sons in resident father homes are also less communicative and less overtly affectionate (Furstenberg, 1988). Thus, although residence may be important for I.Q., it does not necessarily create better father-son attachment.

However, younger children, particularly boys, in father-absent households have been described as more vulnerable, with more aggressive behaviours (Montare & Bonne, 1980) and displaying sex role confusion, compared with children in father-present households (Biller, 1982). This suggests that the presence of a father can have a reducing effect on some of the negative behaviours expressed by boys in father-absent households as well as giving boys a role model thereby lessening the chances that they will display sex role confusion. As is shown to take place in some father-absent households.

### INTIMACY AND NON RESIDENCE

Barriers exist for non-residential fathers seeking to develop close and effective parenting relations with their children. These fathers are less likely than residential fathers to be in contact with their children, especially when a stepfather is in residence (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988). Consequently, the negative consequences of nonresidence may be due to problems of contact, not of the non-residential father status itself. Quality of attachment between fathers and sons can be bought about by emotional closeness and frequent or quality interaction. This attachment may be blocked by custodial divorce issues or interpersonal relations between mother and father (Popenoe, 1996). Under the condition of shared residence, clearer rules can be

established and distinct father responsibilities maintained. In the residential context, fathers find parenting more manageable (Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994).

### FATHERHOOD AND PARENTING STYLES

This chapter titled parenting styles supports the commonly held belief that the parenting styles used with children can have major implications on the development of children. Therefore, the importance of having fathers who parent appropriately is seen as having long term consequences for sons and fathers and their families.

Although most theorists believe that regular interaction is necessary for attachments to form, it has not been possible to specify how much interaction is necessary, perhaps because the quality of interaction is even more important than its quantity (Schaffer & Emerson, 1964). Questions that focus on the quality of interaction between fathers and children persist while assertions about what constitutes good fathering and what the differential impact of negative versus positive father involvement is relatively unchallenged (Lamb, 1997).

The dynamics of father attachment within the home has been understudied in comparison to the pathological effects of a non-residential father (Phares, 1996). Therefore, historically, children's maladjustment has been explored in relation to paternal absence rather than paternal presence (Biller & Solomon, 1986), and father presence has been all but ignored in relation to children's maladjustment (e.g., Lidz, Parker, & Cornelison, 1956; Nash, 1965; Sanua, 1963).

In a study by Gammon and colleagues (1987) depressed children reported more maladaptive relationships with their father (John, Gammon, Prusoff, & Warner, 1987). Depressed children who reported a problematic relationship with their father were more likely to report problems with their mother and their peers (Puig-Antich,

Kaufman, Ryan, & Williamson, 1993). Furthermore, father-adolescent conflict was more predictive of depression in adolescents than was mother-adolescent conflict (Cole & McPherson, 1993). This indicates whether or not a father is within the home, it is the interactive relationships between father and son that are important in regards to mental health. Fathers of suicidal-mood-disordered adolescents reported greater levels of depressive symptoms and greater levels of problems in the family unit than did fathers of nonsuicidal-mood-disordered and nondisturbed adolescents (King, Segal, Naylor, & Evans, 1993).

Gerlsma and colleagues (1990) found that depressed adults were more likely to report “affectionless control” (or low levels of affection combined with high levels of control) from their fathers when they were growing up than did nondepressed adults. Children of depressed fathers show increased levels of psychopathology (Billings & Moos, 1983, 1985; Orvaschel et al., 1988) and increased levels of both internalising and externalising emotional and behavioural problems (Jacob & Leonard, 1986) when compared with children of fathers in a nonclinical control group.

Similarly, Tannenbaum and Forehand (1994) found that a good father-adolescent relationship served to buffer adolescents from maternal depression, which resulted in a lower likelihood of adolescent emotional and behavioural problems. Further, when children of depressed fathers are compared with children of depressed mothers, few differences are found (Beardslee et al., 1987; Billings & Moos, 1983, 1985; Harjan, 1992; Orvaschel et al., 1988). Weissman and colleagues (1984) compared children of fathers who showed both anxiety and depressive disorder with children of fathers who did not evidence any psychopathology. Children of anxious-

depressed fathers showed higher rates of psychopathology than children of nonclinical fathers.

These findings imply that a child does learn psychological and behavioural patterns from their fathers. Consequently, if these negative attributes are so clearly demonstrated between father and son, it is logical that a positive, close attachment between father and son will have very positive effects upon a child's psychological and behavioural development. These findings have far reaching consequences for the study of fathers. Fathers can no longer be seen as lacking in the contributions they can make towards the healthy development of their children. Fathers are not only capable of parenting as well as mothers but they also bring styles and ways of parenting that are unique to fathers. With this information, it is imperative that fathers are acknowledged as having certain qualities that they have been passing on for generations. It is when those qualities are not passed on that future fathers are at risk of impeding the future development of their children. Furthermore, the area of fatherhood has been under studied for far too long and as a consequence the positive and negative attributes of fathers have been greatly undervalued.

### PARENTAL CONTROL

Models of parenting have been studied for a great many years, although the predominant figure in this domain of research has been Baumrind (1966). Baumrind's studies on the three models of parental control, permissive, authoritarian and authoritative have had a major impact on how parenting practices can be grouped under certain models and also, how those parenting styles effect their children in a multitude of ways.

As far back as 1966, Baumrind posed the question about the limits which early internalisation of parental standards imposes upon the development of cognitively

directed responsible behaviour and individuality in later life (Baumrind 1966). The findings of Baumrind's (1966), study were summarised in a later study by Baumrind (1977), those findings are parents of children who were the most self-reliant, self-controlled, explorative and content were themselves controlling and demanding; but they were also warm, rational and receptive to the child's communication. This unique combination of high control and positive encouragement of the child's autonomous and independent strivings was called authoritative parental behaviour.

Parents of children who, relative to the others, were discontent, withdrawn, and distrustful, were themselves detached and controlling and somewhat less warm than other parents. These were called authoritarian parents. Parents of the least self-reliant, explorative and self-controlled children were themselves noncontrolling, nondemanding, and relatively warm. These were called permissive parents.

Although in Baumrind's (1967) study scores used were derived from parent behaviour and attitudes, rather than as in the previous study from scores of child behaviour, sex related differences in the effects of socialisation practices still appeared (Baumrind & Black, 1967).

Baumrind (1971) found that permissive fathers, of boys in particular, who expressed punitive behaviour, admitted being angry over their lack of control and also stated that they did not consistently reward expressions of individuality and self-assertiveness. Sons of these fathers were less independent than sons of authoritative parents. Baumrind (1966) has suggested that permissiveness frees children from the authority and presence of parents. This view is given credence by the findings of Siegel & Kohn (1959), who found that the presence of a permissive adult increased the incidence of aggression by older boys on younger boys in a nursery school setting.

A parent who exerts authoritative control puts great energy into the shaping of a child's behaviour, especially when children are young, which increases the chances of the parenting style being effective. The child may argue and test the parents' limits, (as most children do), but because the child is satisfied with his relationship with his parents, and their parenting style, the child is more likely to conform to his parents' values and not revolt (Baumrind, 1966). Cognitive and emotional disturbances in children, including hostile withdrawal, hostile acting out, dependency, personality problems, nervousness and reduced schoolroom efficiency have been studied and there is evidence that paternal punitiveness, rather than maternal punitiveness, mainly in working class families, is highlighted by severe disturbances in children. This suggests that parenting techniques used by fathers, working class fathers in particular, are harsher than their female counterparts (Baumrind, 1966).

Fathers are able to engage in, and participate in a large range of parenting behaviours which positively influence child development. This is most likely to occur in authoritative settings where parents combine nurturance and discipline. It has been shown that adolescents in authoritative homes in which parents are both nurturant and firm do better psychologically and scholastically (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Macoby & Martin, 1983).

### GENDER DIFFERENCES TO PARENTING STYLES

Investigators, such as Bronfenbrenner (1961), have concluded that similar patterns of child rearing affect boys differently from girls, suggesting that, for boys, it is the absence of sufficient warmth or discipline that impacts upon whether or not a boy is dependable.



A child needs to learn that they can direct their energies wilfully and therefore feel responsible, but learning involves practice, and this usually requires practice in realistic situations that involve conditions which include aversive as well as gratifying stimulation. Thus, children gain important information upon which they can base future choices. The less a child is manipulated by “guilt inducing” techniques of discipline or indirect threats, the more likely it is that he\she will be able to chose responsible action (Baumrind,1966).

Sons of authoritative parenting styles had a high association with social responsibility. This was reflected by the sons being more socially responsible, friendly, co-operative and in the sense that they were more constructive and achievement orientated than the sons of permissive or authoritarian parents (Baumrind,1971). Elder (1967) also found that conformity to parents rules typified adolescents who perceived their parents as having ultimate control but gave explanations for rules and allowed children the room to make decisions.

In a study by Hoffman, Rosan, and Lippit, (1960) children who described their parents as both coercive and permissive, compared with the remainder of the sample studied, were in academic success, social power, group leadership and friendliness. Therefore they were both more assertive and more responsible than children who described their parents as very coercive or very permissive.

In sum, authoritative parents in Baumrind’s (1971) study were characterised by confidence as self as a parent, flexibility and clarity in expression of views and the ability to express anger without reluctance. Together with firm enforcement and nonrejection of children those parents had a pattern of authority which relies upon use of power and reason rather than upon love and guilt or fear to achieve compliance of their children.

## GENDER AND FATHERING

Research by Pollack (1998) suggests that an “extra dose of dad” is one of the best things we can give boys. In an eleven year study of boys and their fathers, Pollack’s findings suggested that, the more shared activities a boy had with his father the more education he completed. There was also found to be a lower incidence of social delinquency, and a closer emotional bond formed between father and son. The results of the study showed that fathers had more of an effect on their teenage sons in their social and academic functioning than mothers did (Pollack, 1998).

Nydegger and Mitteness (1991) found that “ fathers not only socialise their sons into their male world but also share it with them” (p.255). Their research concentrated upon how parent-adult child relations are affected by the gender of the child. The data suggested that fathers considered their primary responsibility to be to socialise their sons into the “male world” and the protection of their daughters. Moreover, fathers in this sample (upper middle class) reported that they found it easier to understand sons in contrast to their female offspring. Consequently, interactions between father and son can be gendered, whereby the transfer of male masculine roles, particularly the traditional male protector role can occur. Therefore, Nydegger and Mitteness (1991) conclude that adult relationships are shaped by gender differences; fathers share a common male world with their sons, from which daughters are excluded; and fathers perceive their duties to their children differently based on the child’s gender.

There is a great deal of evidence that fathers are more involved with sons than daughters (Kotelchuck, 1976; Lamb, 1977; Palmer & Bridges, 1995; Parke & Swain, 1980). Several researchers have also discovered that by early in the second

year of life sons prefer their fathers as playmates (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1977).

Studies focused on father care show that fathers are involved with their children to varying degrees and participate in a variety of childrearing functions (Lamb, 1981; Parke & O'Leary, cited in Lamb, 1981; Parke & Sawin, 1976). Fathers' play styles differ from mothers' play styles with their infants; fathers use more of their time with their infants engaged in play (Parke, 1981) and this play is more vigorous than the mothers' type of play (Clarke-Stewart, 1978). Consequently variations in the play styles of fathers and mothers suggest that fathers offer unique play experiences to their children. The stimulation that a child receives through play episodes with his/her parents links to developmental outcomes in cognitive skills and sociability (Lamb, 1997; Popenoe, 1996). This highlights the importance of play, particularly father involvement in play.

A father is not only more likely to engage in physically active and novel play than the mother for boys, he is likely to become the child's preferred play companion. In addition, various analyses indicate that the level of involvement of the father increases the intergenerational comfort with which boys and girls approach issues of sexuality or sexual behaviour (Arditti, 1991; Barnett et al., 1991). This suggests that a father's involvement heightens later comfort with issues of sexuality, especially masculine sexuality.

## FAMILY STRUCTURES

### MARRIAGE AND FATHERHOOD

This chapter titled family structures brings attention to the diversity of family structures and how those structures can change the ways that individuals perceive themselves and their families. Showing that fathers can be affected greatly by the type of family they are reared in and also the family they form as an adult.

A father contributes to marital quality and in turn marital quality affects the father's functioning in the family (Belsky, 1981; 1984). It is also true that links between marital quality and children's adjustment have long been reported (e.g., Baruch & Wilcox, 1944; Hubbard & Adams, 1936; Rutter, 1970; Watson, 1925; see Emery, 1982; Grych & Fincham, 1990. for reviews). Interparental conflict can have negative effects on children and this conflict can have a deleterious impact whether in an intact family or separated family (Amato & Keith, 1991; Block & Gjerde, 1986; Thompson, 1994). Parental depression (Downey & Coyne, 1990), parental alcoholism (West & Prinz, 1987) and physical abuse between familial members can also be related to this interparental conflict (Wolfe, Jaffe, Wilson, & Zak, 1985).

On the other hand, constructive marital relations may be positive influences; teaching children valuable lessons about conflict expression and negotiation (Cummings & Davies, 1994a). Hetherington and Parke (1993. p.423) believe that "a satisfying marital relationship is . . . the cornerstone of good family functioning which directly or indirectly facilitates effective parenting, positive sibling relationships, and the development of competent, adaptive children."

Fathers have only recently been considered in research as distinct members of the marital dyad and theoretical models of marital functioning have neglected the father. Thus, effects are typically cast in terms of marital quality from the mother's

perspective, the influence of marital quality on mother-child relations or interrelations between marital quality and the mother's adjustment.

Marital quality can influence both the father's and mother's psychological well-being, which, affects the quality of parenting and subsequent marital functioning (Geary, 1999). Marital dysfunction affects a child's well-being through gradual microsocial processes, that is, a slow adaptation of the child to these negative family circumstances. Children's adjustment over time can be understood in terms of specific adaptive or maladaptive emotional, social or cognitive response patterns and dispositions (McBride & Rane, 1997).

Boys and girls within divorced families, whether in mother or father custody, show more acting out behaviours than those in nondivorced families (Hogan et al., 1990). However, boys in both divorced and nondivorced families show more externalising behaviour than girls (Allison & Furstenberg, 1985; Hetherington et al., 1982; Camara & Hetherington, 1984; Johnson, & Zeiss, 1980; Lamb, 1997; Popenoe, 1998). To expand, it has been proposed that under stressful conditions boys are more likely to respond by externalising their feelings, perhaps through aggression, and girls internalizing their comparable feelings (Emery, 1982; Gottman, 1998).

Critical to understanding child outcomes of divorce is viewing divorce as a process (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1978; Wallerstein, 1987) and not an isolated event in the life of the child. The process of divorce likely encompasses declining marital relations, a family context to which the child is exposed for an extended time. Post-divorce a child's stressful familial experience may be heightened. Various studies have established that father-child relations change in the most significant ways during the decline of a marriage. According to Belsky, (1991), fathers were more intrusive

and exhibited more negative interactions with their children if their love for their wives had dwindled and the durability of their marriage was uncertain.

Barriers exist for non-residential fathers seeking to develop close and effective parenting relations with their children. These fathers are less likely than residential fathers to be in contact with their children, especially when a stepfather is in residence (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988). Under the condition of shared residence, clearer rules can be established and distinct father responsibilities established and maintained. In this context, fathers find parenting more manageable (Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994).

We are certainly not the first generation to ponder what role good fathers should play in the family. The ideal of the father has gone through many phases, ranging from the distant authoritarian classic to the cuddly, attuned dad of the present day. In a historical overview of fatherhood, Rex McCann, author of *Fatherless Sons*, says each generation is seeking a less distant and more emotionally available father and man (The Press, Saturday, August 21, 1999).

### CUSTODY AND FATHERS

When fathers lose contact with their children through family disintegration they often feel guilty and inadequate as parents (Reissman, 1990) and their children are denied an important source of support and stimulation. If parental conflict is low, and fathers feel that they have some control over what is happening to their children, and if they are comfortable with their parenting role, the result is a more involved competent nonresident father and a positive relationship that benefits both father and child.

Emery (1994) also suggests that psychological pain is a consequence for children of the loss of contact with noncustodial fathers. Most research has

established that children reside almost full time with their mothers (Emery, 1988a; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1986; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Shrier et al., 1991). However, fathers with joint custody are more comfortable with their parenting role, more involved in childcare (Arditti, 1991, 1992; Bowman & Ahrons, 1985; Stephens et al., 1993) and more compliant with child support orders (Bender, 1994; Stephens et al., 1993). Mothers appear to be better adjusted and less burdened by parenting responsibilities, which frees them to pursue other interests (Bender, 1994; Kelly, 1993; Rothberg, 1983; Stephens et al, 1993).

Men that had sought and won physical custody, saw nothing unusual or pathological about heading single-parent families. Despite their fears and concerns, virtually all of the men reported (Maccoby & Mnookin's 1992) that they believed receiving primary custody was in the best interests of their children. Many physical custody decisions are made by the divorcing parents, not the courts, and the decisions may reflect concerns fathers themselves have about assuming full-time parenting and their capability to do so. On the other hand, (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992) many fathers report that they would like sole or joint physical custody of their children following divorce, but choose not to pursue it. a) This is because they believe their children would benefit more from the closer relationships children are perceived to have with their mothers, b) fathers are concerned about the exposure of their children to prolonged custody battles (Hetherington & Stanley-Hogan, 1986; Maccoby et al., 1993).

## SOLO FATHERS

Statistical information in New Zealand indicates that between the 1986 and 1996 censuses the number of sole parent families where a male is the sole parent grew by approximately 49% from 19,083 to 28,491 (Statistics New Zealand, 1998). Seventeen per cent of families are headed by men (Julian, 1998).

Children living with single parents can experience the consequences of lost income, poor living conditions, including poorer housing (Edelman, 1987) and health risks (Angel & Worobey, 1988). This lack of financial support can also create an increased parental role burden, which reduces a parents' time for each child in the family (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985) and increased stress (McLanahan 1983; McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, & Borquez, 1994; McLoyd, 1990). In addition, reduced economic support is associated with problem behaviour in children (Furstenberg, Morgan, & Allison, 1987).

The foundation of the single parent family is certainly linked to the economic viability of this family for the more financial difficulties experienced by parents, the more likely their children's well-being and positive view of their parents will be diminished (McLoyd et al., 1994). Children of divorce may continue this divorce pattern into their family of today (Amato & Booth, 1991). A central difference between divorced families and intact families then is the level of income available to the family and the impact of poverty. Divorce is a stressful experience for most children and is often accompanied by a decline generally in the standard of living, particularly for mother-headed households (Emery, 1988). Although male headed households may be in a better financial position due to a males' higher wage in contrast to females in society, the less impoverished contact with the father can have



negative emotional consequences for a child and their wellbeing (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Furstenberg et al., 1983).

Given that only 17% of fathers are awarded sole custody, it is not surprising that relatively little is known about their parenting or the quality of their relationships with their children. However, newly divorced resident fathers do appear to experience many of the same problems faced by resident mothers. They report feeling overloaded, socially isolated, and worried about their parenting competence and find that being a custodial father interferes with both their social life and work (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1986).

Many fathers do however have advantages that are less available to single mothers, such as greater economic resources, and better housing, neighbourhood, schools and child care facilities available to them. There are also gender differences in parenting strain. Fathers report more difficulty monitoring their children's health, school work and behaviour, whereas both resident and nonresident mothers report more problems with being firm and patient (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992).

It seems that although single fathers have problems in monitoring they do not have the problems in control and discipline that are characteristic of divorced resident mothers, resident fathers are also more likely to assign household tasks to children (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990).

The degree to which fathers cope with single-parenting may be related to whether they sought custody originally or whether they assumed custody because their mother was incompetent or unwilling to parent (Hanson, 1988; Mendes, 1976a, 1976b). Fathers who have sought physical custody have been found to have had close relationships with their children prior to divorce, and it has therefore been suggested

that the quality of their predivorce relationships may carry over into the new family unit (Parke & Tinsley, 1984).

Many custody seeking fathers usually have more available resources and supports, are more highly educated, and are more likely to be parenting older children and adolescents (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1986).

In sum, it would appear that solo fathers do share some similarities with resident mothers, but that they also are a unique and highly select segment of the population. Solo fathers are increasing in numbers and with these increasing numbers there are difficulties that they face which are unique to fathers in their situation. Being a solo father is still seen by society as the exception rather than the rule and hence there are certain stigmas associated with fathers taking on the responsibilities that were once seen as the central domain of women. Questions need to be asked as to how these minority fathers cope and what their needs are compared to fathers in traditional families. Being a father is a challenging role even when the role of parenting is a shared one. The difficulties which may arise when a father takes on the role of single parent need to be researched greatly not only for the benefit of the father but also for future adults being raised in these situations.

## CONCLUSION

The literature that has been reviewed clearly shows the diversity that abounds with regard to the variation between types of fathers and the considerable array of styles that can be used when parenting. The theme that predominates throughout this review has been that a great many fathers do in fact pass on their values to their sons and that process can be extremely beneficial especially when the father is securely attached, is prepared to communicate, has a cohesive and emotionally available

family, is secure in his role as a father, parents in an authoritative style and when the father himself has had a father who was able to pass on his values.

This review has covered many areas related to fathers and fatherhood but there are many more that need to be incorporated and although they cannot possibly all be investigated within this thesis there is a prevailing picture of fatherhood that has developed. That is one of fathers who, because of their own qualities, pass those qualities onto their sons and thereby allow them to develop healthy and mature ways of coping with their lives as children, adolescents, adults and parents. From the literature presented it does appear that fathers who have had caring and emotionally available fathers have been able to use the values they have learned to have better education, pay, relationships and to create a loving and nurturing environment for their children and families.

By focusing the literature in this thesis on the mainly positive consequences of fathers and therefore fatherhood the question arises as to what are the consequences of not having a father as a parent or of having a father who is not caring and emotionally available. As has been commented on earlier many fathers are becoming more involved with their families and as the research on mothers has shown, positive parenting styles and a secure home environment are major contributing factors in the development of children. Presumably that the same positive outcomes would apply to families who had fathers who become more involved and hence available physically and emotionally, especially for sons.

As the literature review has shown fathers have the potential to play a role in the development of their children and yet there is very little research in the area of fatherhood that specifically addresses the role a father plays in the development of his son.

To add to the research on fatherhood I would like to test whether a father's perceptions on his role as a father influence his role as a father and how these perceptions affect his attachment styles, family's coherence, and his family environment.

It would be of interest to examine how a father transmits his parental role as this role has shown to have great influence on son's development in many diverse ways. Some of those influences can lead to how a man and later father will adjust to the challenges of life and whether he will perceive himself as having a positive or a negative sense of self. Those perceptions can lead to healthy or unhealthy life styles that can influence the relationships he has, especially his own family. It is of necessity that research is carried out to assess how fathers do learn their roles due to the consequences that are known to exist as a partial result of the roles that fathers adopt.

If we are able to learn how roles of fathers are passed on and how different roles affect fathers, their sons and families we would be greatly advantaged in knowing how to help reduce the negative outcomes and to increase the positive outcomes. The ability to learn about the influences of fathers and how fathers themselves learn their roles has major implications for many areas of society.

The evidence suggesting that the family of origin a child is reared in can have many implications for later life including how the family of origin affects many aspects of how people perceive and interact in the family they have created today. I will explore whether there is a relationship between the family of origin a father had within his own family and the family that he has created in the present.

This exploration would be expected to have many implications for how families in which fathers are reared in can influence the families a father later creates as an adult. The knowledge gained from learning about the implications of being

reared in various types of families i.e. the style of attachment that exists between family members, the relationships and amount of family satisfaction, would be of great benefit for future fathers and those interested in how past and present family structures influence family members.

I have decided to research two different groups of fathers, those being, fathers from intact families and solo parent fathers. I have chosen to research these particular groups because I feel that the roles they perceive themselves as having will be different due to their different family structures. The different roles that I would envisage these fathers to have would possibly influence their values, roles, attachment styles, and their interactions within their families. These possible influences could have implications for how fathers within and from different family types perceive and act due to the different roles they have. This could have far reaching consequences on how those roles influence the development of children in the family's of fathers from different family types. It would be highly probable that the role a father perceives himself to be filling will influence relationships with those he has formed attachments with and the style of those attachments. As the review has highlighted attachment styles can have far reaching consequences for later development and therefore by learning about how fathers from different types of family structures affect roles of fathers will be enormously useful in highlighting the central part that fathers can play in families.

As there is no objective measure to assess the role that a father felt his father had in his family of origin I will be using fathers' perceptions of their roles and their families to examine how perceptions of fatherhood are transferred between fathers and their sons. My hypothesis is "that fathers learn their values from their own fathers

and they will perceive themselves as doing as well as or better in the family they have created today”.

It is the perceptions that a father has about his father and family that will guide him in whether he thinks and acts in a negative or a positive manner. I am expecting that fathers who perceived that they were reared in a positive family of origin and perceived their fathers to be involved in and available to them will continue and perceive themselves to have those same values in the family they have created today.

## METHOD

### Participants

Two groups of participants were recruited for the study. The first group of participants were 36 fathers in intact families (men living with the biological mother of their child/children). The second group of participants were 24 solo fathers who had full time custody of the child/children in their care. At the beginning of this study a large number of questionnaires were mailed to men's support groups but because of the poor number of fathers who were willing to participate, (about six questionnaires were returned). I decided to approach fathers from the general population by approaching friends, family, and anyone who was interested in participating in the research being carried out. I was able to pass on my contact number to fathers who did participate in the study and felt that they might know other fathers who may also be willing to participate.

Descriptive statistics for both groups are presented in Table 1 (Results).

Analysis shows the mean scores for solo fathers and intact families show that there was a non significant difference for age, education and socio-economic status in family of origin levels. There was a significant finding for socio-economic status in family of today and income level, showing that socio-economic status in family of today was higher for solo fathers and income levels were lower for intact families.

### Materials and Procedures

All participants completed two sets of questionnaires, one set related to the family in which they were reared, or their family of origin, the second set of questionnaires related to the family they had created today. The questionnaires in each

set were almost identical, the difference being that the participant was being asked to answer it from the family of origin perspective or the family of today. Therefore, there were minor changes in grammar.

To avoid any bias in the filling out of the questionnaires half of participants were given the family of origin questionnaires to answer first, and the other participants completed the remaining half.

Each set of questionnaires was made up of the following measures;

#### 1. Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos, 1986)

This is a 90 item scale that measures three major dimensions of family functioning; relationships, personal growth, and system maintenance. This instrument provides an overview of participants perceptions of the quality of their family social environment as a child. Participants were presented with a series of statements which they answered true or false to each one.

The ten FES subscales assess three underlying domains, or sets of dimensions: the Relationship dimensions, the Personal Growth dimensions, and the System Maintenance dimensions.

The Relationship dimensions are measured by the Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict subscales. These subscales assess the degree of commitment, help, and support family members provide for one another, the extent to which family members are encouraged to act openly and to express their feelings directly, and the amount of openly expressed anger, aggression and conflict among family members.

The Personal Growth, or goal orientation, dimensions are measured by the Independence, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual Cultural Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, and Moral Religious Emphasis subscales. These subscales assess the extent to which family members are assertive, are self sufficient, and make



their own decisions, the extent to which such activities (such as school and work) are cast into an achievement - orientated or competitive framework, the degree of interest in political, social, intellectual, and cultural activities, the extent of participation in social and recreational activities, and the degree on emphasis on ethical and religious issues and values.

The System Maintenance dimensions are measured by the Organization and Control subscales. These subscales assess the degree of importance of clear organization and structure in planning family activities and responsibilities and the extent to which set rules and procedures are used to run family life (Moos & Moos, 1986, pg.1-2).

## 2. Family Coherence And Adaption

The Sense of Coherence (SOC) is a construct that refers to the extent to which one sees one's world as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. This construct has been used to study the hypothesis that the strength of the SOC, central to successful coping with family stressors, is associated with adaption, here defined in terms of perceived satisfaction with intrafamily and family-community fit (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988).

The Family Sense of Coherence Scale (FSOC) consists of 26 semantic differential items, scored from 1 to 7, with extreme anchor phrases. High scores indicate a strong FSOC. Fourteen of the items were phrased so that the higher the number checked, the weaker the coherence; these were reversed in scoring.

The initial basis for constructing the scale was Antonovsky's (1987) questionnaire designed to measure the SOC of the individual as a salutogenic model.

Because the present study focuses on family life items were adapted to a family context. In each case, the underlying frame of an item was the extent to which the respondent perceives family life as comprehensible (a tendency to expect the world to be ordered, or orderable, and facilitates cognitive clarification of the nature of the problems life stresses pose), manageable (a tendency to expect the demands posed by those problems to be manageable and leads one to search out the appropriate resources potentially available to manage the situation), or meaningful (the tendency to see life as meaningful provides the motivational drive to engage in confrontation with the problems) (Antonovsky, 1988, pg. 80).

The Family Adaption Scale (FAS), that is part of the (SOC), consisted of 10 semantic differential items scored from 1 to 7. In each case the extreme anchor phrases were “completely satisfied” and “dissatisfied”. Six of the items were phrased so that the higher the number checked, the poorer the adaption; these were reversed in scoring, so that a high score indicated good adaption.

One item referred to how participants would Rank their family when comparing it to an ideally adjusted family.

Five of the items referred to satisfaction with internal family fit 2 items referred to family-community fit and the three others were less specific, covering both facets of fit.

### 3. The Role Of The Father Questionnaire (ROFQ)

The Role of The Father Questionnaire (ROFQ) measures the extent that an individual believes the father's role is important to child development (Palkovitz, 1984).

The ROFQ contains 15 items. Participants indicate their level of agreement or

disagreement with each item on a 5 point scale.

Scores on the ROFQ can range from 15 to 75. Higher scores reflect attitudes that fathers are capable of and should demonstrate involvement with and sensitivity to their children.

Research by McBride and Rane (1996) have reported good internal consistency using an adapted version of the ROFQ.

Construct validity was indicated through the relationship between father's ROFQ scores and their sex role orientation. For example androgynous fathers ROFQ scores were higher than undifferentiated and masculine fathers ROFQ scores (Palkovitz, 1984). Construct validity is also indicated by statistically significant correlation's between the ROFQ and fathers involvement in child rearing (McBride & Rane, 1996).

In a study by Christiansen (1997), it was found the ROFQ had statistically significant correlation's with measures of psychosocial identity, psychosocial intimacy, marital intimacy, psychosocial generativity, and involvement in child rearing.

#### 4. Adult Attachment Scale

Attachment theory is concerned with the bond that develops between child and caretaker and the consequences this has for the child's emerging self concept (internal working models), and developing view of the social world (Collins & Read, 1990). The Adult Attachment Scale developed by Collins and Read (1990), was used to measure fathers attachment (there were minor changes to grammar).

A person with a secure attachment style is comfortable with closeness, able to depend on others and not worried about being abandoned or unloved. An avoidant

person was comfortable with closeness and intimacy, not comfortable with others' availability and not particularly worried about being abandoned.

An anxious person is comfortable with closeness, fairly confident in the availability of others, but very worried about being abandoned and unloved (Collins & Read, 1990).

One third of the items originated from the "avoidant attachment" description. High scores reflected high avoidance.

One third of the items that originated from the "anxious attachment" description. High scores reflected high anxiety.

One third of the items that originated from the "secure attachment" description. High scores reflected high security.

(Each style of attachment had a maximum possible high score of 30 and a minimum low score of 6). (See Appendix).

The Adult Attachment Scale consisted of an 18 - item scale to measure adult attachment style dimensions and was based on Hazan and Shavers (1987), categorical measure.

There were three dimensions underlying this measure: the extent to which an individual is comfortable with closeness (close), feels he or she can depend on others (depend), and is anxious or fearful about such things as being abandoned or unloved (anxiety).

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which individual statements described their feelings on a scale, ranging from not at all characteristic (1) to very characteristic (5).

The scale comprised of a 18 items, 6 for each of the three attachment styles, (secure, avoidant, and anxious).

If fathers had any problems in specific areas or in determining how to fill out the questionnaire they were able to contact the investigator or supervisor by phone to settle any problems, and to improve the quality and quantity of replies.

## Results

The analyses presented here are organised into six major sections accompanied by tables of results.

Table 1 shows mean scores of solo parent fathers and intact father families concerning demographic measures. A series of *t* tests was performed on the demographic variables. These analyses showed significant differences were found between the participants mean scores on socio-economic status and income level in family of today between solo parent fathers and intact father families, with solo fathers having higher scores on both these demographic measures indicating that they have higher incomes and higher socio-economic status than fathers from intact families. There were no significant differences found for age, socio-economic status in family of origin, and education levels for both groups. There were no other differences found among the demographic variables collected between solo family fathers and intact family fathers, indicating both groups of fathers were from the same general background.

Table 2 presents mean scores for solo parent fathers and intact father families on the Family Environment Scale. A Two Factor Analyses of Variance with 1 within subjects factor (family type) and 1 between subjects factor (type of father) was performed on the data, the results of which are in the table.

The analysis found a significant main effect for family type, that showed fathers, regardless of family type perceived their families of today to be better than their families of origin on the positive (good) dimensions (e.g., cohesion and expressiveness) and to be not doing as badly for the negative (bad) dimensions (e.g., conflict and control). No other significant main effects or interactions were found.

Table 3 presents mean scores for solo father families and intact father families on the Adult Attachment Scale. A Two Factor Analyses of Variance with 1 within subjects factor (family type) and 1 between subjects factor (type of father) was performed on the data, the results of which are in the table.

Again, the analysis found a significant main effect for family type with fathers from both groups perceiving their families of today to be better on the positive dimensions and to be doing not as badly on the negative dimensions, than their families of origin. For example, both fathers from intact families and solo parent fathers had a lower mean score in their family of origin and a higher mean score in their family of today on the dimension of secure attachment. No other significant main effects or interactions were found.

Table 4 presents mean scores for solo father families and intact father families on the Family Coherence Scale. A Two Factor Analyses of Variance with 1 within subjects factor (family type) and 1 between subjects factor (type of father) was performed on the data, the results of which are in the table.

The analysis found a significant main effect for family type. No other significant or main effects were found.

The basic pattern was that both groups of fathers perceived their families of today to be better than their families of origin. For example, for the scale of comprehensibility, solo parent fathers had a significantly lower mean score in their family of origin and a significantly higher mean score in their family of today. Fathers from intact families had a significantly lower mean score for their family of origin and a significantly higher mean score for their family of today on the scale of comprehensibility. No other significant or main effects were found.

Table 5 displays correlation coefficients for solo father families and intact father families between the role of the father questionnaire and variables from the family environment scale, adult attachment scale, and the family coherence scale.

Because the role of the father in today's family was seen as the main focus of this study, I wished to look at it more specifically and to see if the factors involved in making up the two groups' perceptions of fatherhood would be different.

Therefore, a series of correlational analyses were performed on the data, the results of which are presented in tables. However these correlations correlated with different variables in the majority of cases depending on the type of family. For example, solo father families in their family of today had significant correlations with cohesion, control and secure. Whereas intact father families in their family of today had significant correlations with independence, achievement and organization.

These findings indicated a trend suggesting that the high scores on the role of father questionnaire tended to be related to high scores on the variables.

Table 6 shows correlation coefficients between the role of father questionnaire for family today and the role of father questionnaire for family of origin for intact father families and solo father families. This analysis was performed to determine the relationship between ROFQ of father of origin scores with father of today ROFQ scores.

A significant correlation between ROFQ today and ROFQ family of origin was revealed for fathers from intact families, but not for solo father families.

Together these findings indicated a difference between intact family fathers and solo family fathers in the relationship they perceived between their role of their family of today and their fathers' role in their family of origin.



**Table 1: Mean scores of solo parent and intact family groups concerning demographic measures**

DEMOGRAPHIC MEASURES	SOLO PARENT FATHERS	INTACT FATHER FAMILIES	t-VALUE
Age (years)	42.6	42.2	NS
Socio-economic status in Family of Today <sup>1</sup>	3.2	4.8	-2.28*
Socio-economic status in Family of Origin <sup>1</sup>	4.3	4.3	NS
Income Level <sup>2</sup>	4.9	3.9	3.18**
Education Level <sup>3</sup>	4.0	3.7	NS

1 Scores on this scale ranged from 1 - 7 with lower numbers representing higher SES levels.

2 Scores on this scale ranged from 1 - 6 with lower numbers representing lower INCOME levels.

3 Scores on this scale ranged from 1 -5 with lower numbers representing lower EDUCATION levels.

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Table 2: Participants' mean scores on the Family Environment Scale.

Family Type	Type of Father						
	<u>Solo Parent Fathers</u>		<u>Intact Family Fathers</u>		<u>F-values</u>		
	Family of Origin	Family of Today	Family of Origin	Family of Today	Family Type	Type of Father	Interaction
<u>Family Environment Scale</u> <sup>1</sup>							
<u>Relationship Dimension</u>							
Cohesion	35.0	49.6	30.9	50.6	221.2**	ns	ns
Expressiveness	31.2	54.3	37.1	55.7	77.8**	ns	ns
Conflict	56.0	48.4	57.3	47.0	19.9**	ns	ns
<u>Personal Growth Dimension</u>							
Independence	30.7	44.5	33.9	42.8	16.5**	ns	ns
Achievement Orientation	41.4	37.3	38.9	40.0	ns	ns	ns
Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	40.0	51.2	39.3	53.7	44.2**	ns	ns
Active-Recreational Orientation	44.4	52.0	42.3	53.9	36.9**	ns	ns
Moral-Religious Orientation	47.4	42.3	46.8	42.2	7.7**	ns	ns
<u>System Maintenance Dimension</u>							
Organisation	50.1	45.0	50.1	47.4	2.6*	ns	ns
Control	60.2	47.8	58.8	46.7	45.3**	ns	ns

<sup>1</sup> These scores are T-values with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10.

\*  $p < .05$  (1,58 df); \*\*  $p < .01$  (1,58 df); ns=non-significant

Table 3: Participants’ mean scores on the Adult Attachment Scale.

Family Type	Type of Father						Interaction
	<u>Solo Parent Fathers</u>		<u>Intact Family Fathers</u>		<u>F-values</u>		
	Family of Origin	Family of Today	Family of Origin	Family of Today	Family Type	Type of Father	
<u>Type of Attachment</u>							
Secure <sup>1</sup>	18.7	20.3	18.9	21.6	9.2	ns	ns
Avoidant <sup>1</sup>	15.7	15.8	15.6	15.1	ns	ns	ns
Anxious <sup>1</sup>	17.7	16.3	17.2	15.0	6.7	ns	ns

<sup>1</sup> These scores ranged from 6-30 with higher numbers indicating greater levels of secure, avoidant, or anxious attachment.

\*\*p<.01 (1,58 df); ns=non-significant

Table 4: Participants' mean scores on the Family Coherence Scale.

Family Type	Type of Father						
	<u>Solo Parent Fathers</u>		<u>Intact Family Fathers</u>		<u>F-values</u>		
	Family of Origin	Family of Today	Family of Origin	Family of Today	Family Type	Type of Father	Interaction
<u>Sense of Coherence Measures</u>							
Comprehensibility <sup>1</sup>	40.8	49.4	41.2	48.9	35.5**	ns	ns
Manageability <sup>2</sup>	40.7	49.8	41.0	51.2	50.1**	ns	ns
Meaningfulness <sup>3</sup>	40.1	49.8	41.0	51.2	38.1**	ns	ns
Family Satisfaction <sup>4</sup>	38.0	52.8	40.4	53.8	50.1**	ns	ns
Overall Rank <sup>5</sup>	4.0	2.6	3.9	2.6	44.2**	ns	ns

\*\*p<.01 (1,58 df) ns=non-significant

<sup>1</sup> These scores ranged from 11-77 with higher numbers indicating greater degrees of comprehensibility.

<sup>2</sup> These scores ranged from 10-70 with higher numbers indicating greater degrees of manageability.

<sup>3</sup> These scores ranged from 8-56 with higher numbers indicating greater degrees of meaningfulness.

<sup>4</sup> These scores ranged from 10-70 with higher numbers indicating greater degrees of satisfaction.

<sup>5</sup> This score ranged from 1-7 with lower numbers indicating a higher ranking of the family's overall level of functioning.

Table 5: Correlation Coefficients between Role Of Father Questionnaire <sup>1</sup>  
and other Variables Collected

	<u>Role Of Father Questionnaire</u>	
	<u>Family Of Today</u>	
	SOLO PARENT FATHERS	INTACT FATHER FAMILIES
Cohesion	.60 **	-
Expressiveness	-	-
Conflict	-	-
Independence	-	.35 *
Achievement	-	.38 *
Orientation		
Intellectual	-	-
Cultural		
Orientation		
Active	-	-
Recreational		
Orientation		
Moral Religious	-	-
Emphasis		
Organization	-	.47 **
Control	.44 *	-
Comprehension	-	-
Manageability	.44 *	.32 *
Meaningfulness	.39 *	.41 *
Family	-	-
Rank	-	-
Anxiety	-	- .39 *
Secure	.44 *	-
Avoidant	-	- .33 *

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

<sup>1</sup> Non - Significant Correlations have been omitted from the Table for clarity of presentation.

Table 6: Correlation Coefficients between Role Of Father Questionnaire Today and  
Role Of Father Questionnaire Origin for Intact Family Fathers and Solo Parent  
Fathers

	<u>Role Of Father Questionnaire    Today</u>	
<u>Role Of Father</u> <u>Questionnaire</u> <u>Family Of Origin</u>	<u>Intact Family Fathers</u>	<u>Solo Parent Fathers</u>
	.35 *	- .18

\* p < .05

## **Discussion**

### **Hypothesis Discussed in Terms of Results**

This section summarises and integrates the findings that address the primary research hypothesis: That is the perception a man has of his own values as a father will be associated with the values, he perceived his father to have with his family.

The result, however, showed fathers in both types of families perceived themselves as not only as doing as well as their fathers in their family of origin, but in the majority of dimensions measured they perceived themselves as doing better in their family of today.

A finding of this study have been the correlations that have been found to exist between the Role Of Father Questionnaire and the three other questionnaires, (Family Environment Scale, Adult Attachment Scale and Family Coherence Scale) used in this study.

There was a positive correlation between secure attachment for solo fathers in their family today but there was no significant correlation for parent and child in their family of today. This finding suggests that the formation of a secure attachment is a an important characteristic in the role of the family, for solo fathers presumably because they are the adult in their family and it is their responsibility to create a secure environment for their family. As has been suggested earlier a secure attachment is a base for the future formation of positive relationships and these relationships contribute significantly to how an individual will feel about their own sense of self and those with whom they interact.

The secure attachment style is a central dimension in the lives of solo fathers due to the fact that they have taken over the roles that are most often associated with

motherhood. It is not only that solo fathers have taken over the roles associated with mothers but also that they are the only person available to fulfil that role.

As has been the central theme throughout this thesis, fatherhood is a complex phenomena. With no singular dimension that indicate how a man will perform as a father. As this research has suggested there are a number of central areas that help in the formation of a father, those being, a fathers perceptions of his families relationships and values, his perceptions of the attachment styles that exist within his present and past family, a fathers perceptions of the roles fathers play in their families, and the amount of comprehensibility (or understanding) that a father has regarding their family, the amount of control they have over their family and the meaningfulness there family has for them.

As the results have clearly shown fathers consider that they are doing better on all the dimensions that were tested. This is not surprising considering that many of the fathers who participated in the research were born in the early sixties and as a result of this were likely to have had fathers who were considered to be very traditional. When the children of these fathers became men they wanted to make changes in their relationships with their children that would encourage communication and also their availability to their children.

I would propose that fathers of intact families do not have a positive correlation between the role of father questionnaire and a secure attachment style in their family of today not because secure attachment is unimportant to themselves and their families but because they have a family very similar to their family of origin. Therefore, because fathers from intact families also have what could be called “traditional families” they are able to use the same values that they learned in their family of origin in the family they have formed today.



Also there were significant differences found between intact families and solo fathers on a number of dimensions. Fathers in intact families were shown to have a significant correlations between their ROFQ in their family of origin and their ROFQ in their family of today, whereas a nonsignificant correlation was found between solo fathers ROFQ in their family of origin and their ROFQ in their family of today. When it is remembered that the ROFC was designed to measure individuals' perceptions of the roles fathers play in their family. It would appear that fathers who were reared in intact families and went on to form intact families themselves perceive themselves to be similar to their father in terms of the role of the father questionnaire have been able to use the lessons they learned from their own fathers in their families today. This suggests that they have carried forward the roles they learned from their fathers into their families today.

Solo fathers however who were reared in intact families and learned the role of the father in their environment, seemed to find little to relate from their past to their present situation.

Solo fathers are men who have taken on the roles of both parents, and, therefore, may have changed their ways of thinking about and responding to their children. This, presumably, is why the role of the father questionnaire has shown to be positively correlated with intact fathers but not with solo fathers. Solo fathers internal working models have changed to accommodate their new responsibilities that have been imposed upon them by their changed status of "solo father".

### Limitations Of The Study

As discussed earlier a major limitation of the present study is that the fathers who did participate were highly motivated and I would suggest also that they were a “securely attached” group of fathers..

There were only two groups of fathers researched and therefore it is not known whether the resulting findings can be generalised to fathers from different groups, for example, step fathers.

Income and education levels have been shown to have a varied range of effects on many aspects of family life and I would suggest that a broader range of income and education levels would be helpful in determining whether individuals responses to the questionnaires would be different.

The age of the fathers within this study were very similar and therefore their could be a “cohort” effect. That is fathers who grew up and lived in about the same period could be similar in many of their views with regard to the way that they perceive fatherhood. For this reason it may not be possible to generalise the findings of this research to fathers of other ages. We could learn a lot more about the possible effects of the age of fathers by having a larger variation of ages thereby giving a more realistic understanding of fathers of all ages.

Because of the confinements of working within a thesis structure it was not possible to look at the very important role that age of father at birth of first child and the age of children in general as well as the effects of gender and number of children might have on fathers. These are very important areas in ones family that I feel need to be researched greatly to ascertain what impact they may have on fathers and the ways in which they parent. From discussions with fathers from both groups it was clear that the age of children had an effect on how fathers interacted with them and in

fact how the children interacted with their fathers. Also it was clear that fathers interacted differently with male children when compared to how they interacted with female children.

With the acknowledgement that these differences do exist it would be surprising if those differences did not have effect both parents and children. It is those differences and effects that could lead to valuable information being gained and thereby hopefully helping to understand fatherhood further. As has been discussed earlier single father families are a small but growing proportion of possible family styles. It would be beneficial to know how those single fathers came to be in their present role, for example, did they seek custody or was it to some degree imposed upon them due to ill health of their partner. By answering these questions and also by researching a larger number of single fathers I am sure greater knowledge could be gained into the complexities of single fathers. The knowledge gained from researching single fathers would help answer many of the questions that are starting to be asked by people from many diverse groups within society.

It also came as some what of a surprise to find that single fathers within this study had higher socio-economic status and higher income levels than fathers from intact families. Also although education level was non-significant between both groups of fathers, solo fathers had a slightly higher mean score, 4.0 compared to 3.7 for fathers from intact families. This does not align itself with past research findings that have found that single fathers have less education and considerably less earnings and income than their married counterparts (Meyer & Garasky, 1996).

Securely attached people have been shown to have higher “quality” lives than people who are anxious or avoidant (Belsky,1996). In fact securely attached people are rewarded by this attachment style in all the positive dimensions of their lives. If a

father is securely attached to his father then that attachment enhances the probability that he will be reared in a more caring and creative home environment, he and his family are also more likely to have a good education and income, which have been shown to have enormous positive consequences. Income and education levels are a central indicator in assessing how children and adults perceive the quality of their lives and also how they interpret the world in which they live.

Parenting styles have been shown to have a major influence on how children function and develop (Baumrind1971). A review of the literature on authoritative parenting and secure attachment suggest that when looked at as a whole, they come together to create a picture of how a healthy individual is reared. As the findings in this study suggest, fathers who are secure with their role as fathers and have learned values from their own fathers are not only using those values in the family they have created today. They are, presumably, also strengthening the bonds that they have with their families by enhancing the positive roles and models that they learned in their families of origin.

Palkovitz (1984), stated that androgynous fathers scores on the Role Of Father Questionnaire were higher than undifferentiated and masculine fathers. This information has great relevance to the interpretation of the results of this thesis. The definition of androgyny given by Bem (1974), “ the possession of both masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours to high levels, for example, being both assertive and yielding and both instrumental and expressive”. With this definition in mind it is easy to see how androgynous individuals have the best of both masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviours that are due to their androgynous nature. These include flexibility, in being able to adopt the appropriate behaviour for a

situation from the range of masculine and feminine behaviours. Bem (1974) also found that androgynous individuals of both sexes to be the epitome of psychological health, suggesting that this is due to their adaptability because they are less restricted in the range of behaviours available to them in various situations.

It would be of benefit to acknowledge the positive implications of having a father who can transmit his positive role and fatherly characteristics to his children and especially his sons. The rewards that are gained by individuals and families who do have a father who is prepared to be a “quality parent” not only effect his immediate family, but also affect the greater society as well as future generations.

The fathers who did participate in this research have due to their ability to look back at what some would call “sensitive” issues in their past and present have provided information that suggests that fathers who are securely attached and perceive themselves as having positive roles to play in their families do pass on those values and styles of fatherhood to future generations. These findings have considerable implications for future research on fathers especially with regard to the developmental outcomes that can eventuate from having fathers who are prepared to form secure attachments and communicate with their children.

Many of the fathers who participated in this research communicated that although they felt that their fathers were good role models they also felt that their fathers worked too much and when they did have spare time it was used for recreational activities that did not include the children. Fathers acknowledged that with the changing patterns of work force participation, for example, mothers working longer hours outside of the home, then there were more opportunities for fathers to

become more involved with their children and take on more of the day to day duties that are required in family life.

This desire for change was as a result of what they saw as a lack of father involvement in their own childhood not only with regard to the actual amount of time that their fathers spent with them but also the quality of the involvement. This is not to say that the fathers in the present study felt that they themselves had fathers who were never home or emotionally unavailable, but that today's fathers are more aware of the need for quality interactions with their children and also the resulting positive gains that come from those types of relationships. Families and their structure have changed immensely over the last twenty to thirty years especially with regard to the amount of time women in particular are spending in the work force. With those changes fathers roles have also been changing to that associated more with a caregiver role and less as just that of breadwinner. The changes that have been shown to occur between fathers and sons in this research I feel adds credence to the actuality of those changes. Change especially when it takes place within families does not take place within a vacume but has lasting effects that impact on many areas of ones life.

I feel that it is of significance that the results section show that there are positive correlation's between both groups of fathers on family of today when correlated with the role of father questionnaire regarding manageability and meaningfulness.

One could suggest that such fathers would be available for questioning when required and also passing on information to their sons in the most constructive ways, ways that they probably learned in their own family of origin. It could be said that a fathers conscious decision to find ways to make his life and the lives of those around him more rewarding and productive leads to changes that are reflected in everyday

life.

The results show that the higher the score on the ROFC then the lower the score on anxiety meaning fathers perceive less anxiety if they also see their role as a father as being important in the development of children.

As Palkovitz (1984) has suggested it is the fathers' perception of his role as a man and as a father that decides how he will attach to and the relationships he will form with not only his partner but his children as well. I would suggest that it is those relationships that a father has with his son that will greatly influence the direction in life that son will take.

It is of great importance that authors, such as those above, are listened to and their research findings are used to highlight the importance of fathers effects on the development of children of all ages. It is only by in depth research in the area of fatherhood that we can answer questions about the negative and positive consequences of fathers and how we can use that information to help fathers and families in the future.

For solo fathers to become quality parents they have needed to learn life skills that have been considered those of mothers for many generations. After having many discussions with solo fathers throughout the writing of this thesis it has been brought to my attention many times that many solo fathers are in the situation where they not only need to be seen as a male role model but also as fulfilling the role of the mother. They also stated that they felt they have needed to be both sensitive and firm, close rather than distant, authoritative rather than authoritarian, nurse as well as teacher and also to be able to work and function outside of the home as the expectations of society decree a male should.

“Quality of life” is a description that had great meaning to many of the fathers who participated in the research and consequently the use of this term pertained to many of the same issues which fathers saw as connected. For example, fathers from intact families expressed the belief that by being more involved with the day to day challenges of being a parent they also reaped great rewards. Some of those rewards can be seen clearly in the perceptions of the families that they have created today which appear to be more cohesive, secure, less anxious and less avoidant than in their families of origin.

If it were possible to observe the families that fathers have created today I would expect there to be many relationships that are based on respect and caring and values that are clearly expressed in the literature with regard to acknowledging an individual's perspective, and thereby allowing family members to communicate in a healthy and adult fashion. This view is expressed with regard to fathers who are securely attached.

As a result children who do have parents who take the time to talk to them and explain the reasoning and the workings of life as they see it, have children who feel that their rights are being heard and that they also have a positive sense of identity which affects their development at all levels, especially their sense of self.

## **Conclusion**

Not only has this thesis suggested that fathers do perceive themselves to be doing better in the majority of lives dimensions in the families they have created today, but also it has been discovered that there can be significant differences in the way that different groups of fathers perceive the role of the father in the present day.



This finding could have interesting influences on the future development of children growing up in non-traditional families. Future research may find that a great many of today's fathers are in fact forming closer attachments than their fathers before them. As a result their children may be found to be more resilient and secure in the ways in which they cope with the changing demands that are so frequently associated with today's changing society.

The findings of this thesis do suggest that fathers play an important part in the formation of the roles that their sons have in later life. With the suggested implications of a positive or a negative role model as a father there does need to be a directed effort to increase the research within this area. By researching the area of fatherhood in greater depth, it would be hoped that future findings would enable people from many diverse backgrounds, e.g., teachers, policy makers, family planners and parents to understand the fundamental role fathers can have. Future research may be able to be used for the benefit of children, adults, fathers, families and therefore the greater society. How those benefits may come about I can only speculate but I would suggest that by making more information available to men, fathers and those who have an interest in the role men and fathers play in life would help and aid in the lives of not only men and fathers but people in the greater society.

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